

On the generic names *Notophorus*, *Alces*, *Dama*, and *Cephalotes*, with remarks on the "one-letter rule" in Nomenclature.

Since, in a matter so essentially important as nomenclature, I look upon any obstinacy in upholding one's own opinions in doubtful cases as both childish and criminal, I gladly adopt the view advocated by Dr. Allen* that *Notophorus* Fisch. should be considered as a pure synonym of *Tayassu* Fisch., and therefore Dr. Merriam's *Olidosus* should stand. I do this mainly on the ground that Fischer's placing of *Tayassu* as equivalent to *Notophorus*, may be considered as synonymizing them *ab initio*, without discussing the reasons given by Dr. Allen against my acceptance of *Sus tayassu* Linn. Gmel. as a type species.

Dr. Allen's renaming of the Elk (Moose) on the ground that *Alces* is antedated and invalidated by *Alce* is of course in direct conflict with the principles advocated in my own remarks on *Callorhinus* versus *Cal-lirhinus* and *Stenorhynchus* v. *Stenorhynchus*.† But far from thinking that the *Alces* case is one to cause hesitation in accepting what has been called the "one-letter rule," I look upon the resulting retention of so well and long known a name as *Alces* for the Elks as an instance in its favor. As Dr. Allen shows, this name has been used for the Elks for a long period by naturalists of all nations, and the fact that *Alce* would also be valid, for the fossil Irish Deer, is but a small drawback compared to the advantage of retaining *Alces*. When we look at the retention of other well known names affected by this rule, such as *Macroglossus*, *He-liophobius*, *Callorhinus*, &c., I think the balance of advantage will be on its side. Nor is it evident where a line is to be drawn between the extreme one-letter principle, and the confusion of such differently spelt words as *Prionodon* and *Priodontes*, or even *Odocoileus* and *Calodon*.‡ There appear to me to be only two alternatives in any given case—either (1) the two names are the same and should be spelt the same (old fashioned emendation combined with non-compatibility of words of like origin, or (2) the names being differently spelt, are to be treated as different, however nearly like (modern non-emendation, and its logical consequence the one letter rule). The position adopted by some writers of stoutly opposing emendation and at the same time objecting to the one-letter rule seems to me supported by neither logic nor classicality.

But with specific names the case is different. There, far from being barred, emendation, when demanded by classic correctness, is universally practiced, and no doubt rightly so. Its consequence therefore, the one letter rule, does not follow, and, while admitting both *Picus* and *Pica* as valid generic names, we should not dream of admitting both *picatus* and *picata* as valid specific ones in the same genus, for the reason that either would be emended to agree with the gender of the generic name,

*Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XVI, pp. 162 and 168. July 1, 1902.

†Supra p. 154.

‡The earlier of these has actually been said to invalidate the use of the later.

and would thus clash into the other. Similarly *græcus* and *grecus* could not be admitted side by side, nor *borneoensis* and *borneensis*, *canadiensis* and *canadensis*.

Besides the emendation reason for this distinction between the treatment of genera and species, it must be remembered that the chances are greatly against two closely similar generic names coming very near each other in the system, or being frequently used by the same person. On the other hand, to have two species of the same genus, and even from the same country, with closely similar names would produce the maximum of inconvenience, with no corresponding advantage in the direction of stability, uniformity or logicalness.

Dr. Allen quotes me as agreeing with him in the use of *Damà* for the American Deer, but I happened to be correcting the proofs of the description of "*Dama rothschildi*" when his paper came in, and I used the name without very close enquiry. On further consideration, however, I think I was wrong, and should now be disposed to adopt on this subject both Mr. Miller's conclusions* and his reasons for them, calling the Coiba Deer *Odocoileus rothschildi*.

In connection with disputed points in nomenclature I may take this opportunity of pointing out that *Nyctimene*, Bechstein†, with the type "*Vespertilio cephalotes*" Pallas, antedates *Cephalotes* Geoffroy (1810), and that the type of the latter should also be *V. cephalotes*, following the rule recently published in Science‡. The name *Cephalotes* will become a synonym of *Nyctimene*, and *Dobsonia* Palmer, will stand for the bat called *Cephalotes* by Dobson and Matschie.—*Oldfield Thomas*.

P. S. Sept. 1, 1902.

It has been objected that in the above note the undeniable difference between a mere adjectival declension such as *picat-us*, *-a -um*, and a more essential modification, such as from *Abrothrix* to *Habrothrix*, has been too much ignored, and that my arguments depend on there being no real difference between them. But this is not so, for quite apart from any such argument, I hold that since on the one hand such double forms as *græcus* and *grecus*, *canadensis* and *canadiensis* should not be both admitted side by side, and on the other that essentially similar forms of generic names such as *Pridontes* and *Prionodon* should be so admitted, a line has to be drawn somewhere between the two extremes, and that this line may most naturally, certainly and conveniently be placed between genus and species.

No other suggestions, so far as I know, have been made for the drawing of the line required, authors (like Dr. Allen in the case of *Alce* and *Alces*) who cavil at the one-letter rule not saying at what point they would cease to consider two similar words synonymous. Nor do I know what is the opinion of the extreme one-letter men about such specific names as those above quoted.—*O. T.*

*Supra, p. 39.

†Syst. Uebers. Vierf. Thiere. II, p. 615. 1800.

‡Science, N. S. XVI, p. 114. July 18, 1902.